

HR Tool Box

State
of
Vermont

Department
of
Human
Resources

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Karin Pelletier
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From the Commissioner - David K. Herlihy

Welcome to Doreen Marquis, DHR Commissioner's Assistant who joined us on February 25, 2008 from the Human Resources Department at TD Banknorth. Prior to this, she was a high school English teacher for several years and is a long time resident of Vermont. We are all thrilled to have Doreen on board!



Welcome back to Bill Reynolds, DHR General Counsel, who recently joined us from the Vermont Attorney General's Office. Bill served as interim General Counsel in 2004-05 while I was in Iraq. As an Assistant Attorney General, Bill represented state agencies and departments in employment cases before the Vermont Labor Relations Board, Human Rights Commission and Vermont Supreme Court. Prior to joining the Attorney General's Office, Bill worked as a prosecutor in the Bronx District Attorney's Office in New York.

Regarding Settlements...

Most of us who work in HR have encountered a situation in which the State and an employee (or former employee) enter a negotiated settlement to resolve a conflict. Most often, the terms of such agreements are set forth in a stipulation. In many cases, the Labor Relations Division of DHR, or a member of the DHR legal team, or both are involved with the negotiation of these agreements. From time to time, DHR is not involved. When that is the case and departments strike deals without DHR involvement, problems arise all too frequently. Sometimes it's a problem with the administration of a term of settlement because a deal has been made to do something that is contrary to State policy or that cannot be accurately reflected in our IT systems. On occasion an agreement is drafted without crucial language that leaves the state vulnerable to legal claims. Other times it's because an element of a deal is something that DHR simply cannot accept as a precedent for all of state government in dealing with our workforce. Although our agreements normally include "non-precedent" language, the reality is that once we agree to a certain term, the V.S.E.A. and others will be aware that we have accepted it in at least one case, and expect that it may be available as a term in other cases.

The bottom line is that to avoid unpleasant surprises, extra work, and possible harm to your relationship with "the other side," it's important to get DHR involved in the process early. I acknowledge that there may be cases in which we tell you that we can't do something that you might like to include in a settlement, but we are looking out for your interests and the interests of state government as a whole.

Benefits Corner

Student Verification Process Change

The State Employees Health Plan currently allows for coverage of dependent children beyond the age of 19 if they are a full-time student or disabled. The verification process begins roughly two months before the dependent's 19th birthday with a letter from CIGNA to the employee. Historically, the employee was required to submit supporting documentation to prove status as a full-time student, which could be very labor-intensive for both the employee and the Benefits Unit.

Beginning with student letters issued on March 1, 2008 (for birthdays in May 2008) the process will be slightly different. Employees will no longer be required to submit school schedules or copies of tuition bills as proof of their dependent's full-time status. The state has worked with CIGNA to develop an affidavit that each employee will sign attesting that his or her dependent is a full-time student or on an approved medical leave of absence from the school. The supporting documents (schedules or tuition bills) will no longer be required. This should make the verification process much easier for the member. However, if the affidavit is not submitted within the required period, even dependents that are full-time students could experience a lapse in coverage.

Please note if a dependent over the age of 19 is NOT a full-time student or disabled, the employee should send an updated medical/dental enrollment form to the benefits unit to stop premium deductions. As outlined in the governing plan document, premium overpayments cannot be refunded. The Employee Benefits Unit will send COBRA coverage information to eligible dependents that lose coverage through this process.

If you have questions about the Student Verification process, please contact Anne Carver at 828-0648 or Jerry Fry at 828-3455.

Did You Know?

Vermont Human Resources Association

The Vermont Human Resources Association (VHRA) is Vermont's oldest and largest association devoted to the elevation of the human resources profession through development of both the experienced human resources professional and those new to this exciting field.

VHRA provides networking events and educational opportunities to members and guests on a wide range of HR-related topics on a monthly basis.

Knowledge increases your value as a human resources professional and VHRA is here to provide you with the resources to stay in the forefront of your profession. Small and large organizations benefit from affiliation with the Vermont Human Resources Association.

Benefits of VHRA membership include:

- Current information about topics related to the human resources profession
- Legislative updates
- Professional networking opportunities
- Monthly breakfast meetings and periodic day-long workshops
- Opportunities to earn PHR/SPHR recertification credits
- Career development
- Access to job postings and internship listings in the field of human resources
- Committee work with peers

If interested in becoming a member of this local chapter of SHRM, please visit the web site at www.vthra.org. The link to VHRA's enrollment application can be found on their home page. The cost to join is \$60.00 per calendar year and there is a fee of \$10.00 to attend the monthly breakfast meetings. For additional information or questions, you may contact VHRA@Champlain.edu.

Labor Relations

Medical RIF Guidelines

These guidelines have been created in order to promote statewide uniformity and consistency in the administration of the Medical Reduction in Force (RIF) process. The Labor Relations Division reviews all other RIF situations to ensure compliance with pertinent provisions of the labor contracts, and other State and/or federal requirements (such as ADA, etc.). The need for that review is as great, if not greater in Medical RIF cases; consequently, they must also review Medical RIF situations as well.

Agencies and departments who are contemplating a Medical RIF for an employee must first contact the Labor Relations Division of the Department of Human Resources to discuss the details of the situation. The final authority to authorize a Medical RIF rests with the DHR Commissioner.

The Labor Relations Division must authorize all Medical RIF letters, prior to being sent to an employee, and can provide assistance in drafting these letters. Minimally, there are two letters that must be provided to the employee:

1. Options Letter – This letter is issued when the department is contemplating the employee's separation for medical reasons, and serves as a "Loudermill" letter. The letter outlines several options that the employee may consider. An employee may receive more than one of these letters over time, depending upon the response and the particular circumstances involved. This is not a matter that can be addressed with a "one size fits all" form letter – Labor Relations and/or DHR Legal must review to make sure that the letter fits the particular circumstance presented. Options that are customarily included in the letter are:

- a. Reasonable Accommodation
- b. Use up current leave balances
- c. Leave of absence
- d. Medical RIF
- e. Retirement

2. Final Decision Letter – This letter is issued when it has been finally determined that the employee will be subject to the Medical RIF and notifies him/her of the effective date of separation, and of any residual reemployment rights he or she may have. This letter is normally sent at least thirty (30) calendar days prior to the contemplated effective date of separation.

The DHR Recruitment Services Division will become involved once an employee has actually received a Final Decision Letter with an effective date for the Medical RIF. The Final Decision Letter should include the 1-800-640-1657 phone number for the Recruitment Services Division. The Director of Recruitment Services (Rossie Conklin) must be copied on the letter so that she may assign a Recruiter to work with the individual in setting RIF reemployment parameters.

The Recruitment Services staff will not have access to any individual's medical information. Mandatory offers of employment will be based upon the parameters set by the individual, provided it is determined that the individual meets the minimum qualifications of a particular position. It is the responsibility of the hiring manager to explain the essential functions of the position to the individual, and inquire as to whether the individual can perform the essential functions of the job, with or without a reasonable accommodation. If the mandatory offer of employment is declined, the hiring manager should immediately notify the DHR Recruiter. If the mandatory offer of employment is accepted, but requires a reasonable accommodation, the normal ADA accommodation process would apply. Once an offer of employment is accepted, the DHR Recruiter should also be notified and the employee will be placed in a 90-day working test period.

If the hiring department has questions related to the position or the RIF placement, the DHR Recruiter should be contacted.

If the hiring manager has questions regarding the Reasonable Accommodation process, fitness for duty issues, or other concerns related to a medical RIF rehire situation, he or she should contact the department's HR Administrator or the Chairperson of the State's Reasonable Accommodation Committee (John Berard) in the Labor Relations Division.

Please note that no actions for medical RIF will be approved for entry in HCM unless an agency or department has adhered to these guidelines. Substantial delay may result in the event DHR determines that revised letters must be provided to the employee.

Medical RIF will be on the agenda for the March 27, HR Partners meeting.

Updates from the Division of Workforce Development and Wellness

NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION - FOR HUMAN RESOURCE PROFESSIONALS

One reason people change jobs is that they never feel truly welcome or a part of the organization they join. If a company spends considerable money recruiting, interviewing and perhaps even relocating employees, it makes good sense to go one step further and make the new employee feel like they have made a good decision to come to this company. A thoughtful new employee orientation program, coupled with an employee handbook that communicates workplace policies can reduce turnover and save that organization thousands of dollars. Whether your company has two employees or two thousand employees, don't leave new employee orientation to chance.

Instructor: KnowledgeWave

Date: Tuesday, May 6, 2008

Time: 9:00am to 4:00pm

Location: The Summit: Center for State Employee Development, Waterbury, VT

Cost: \$110.00

Code: 040165

Within the next few weeks the Workforce Development and Wellness Division will be sending to all supervisors in state service a brief note and request for their input on future supervisory training. Supervisors will receive a short explanatory note and a link to a training survey conducted on Zoomerang. We request that all HR staff forward these notes to their supervisory staff and encourage them to complete the requested survey.

The pertinent text of the postcard appears below:

"A number of years ago the State and VSEA initiated a study of supervisory skills using a confidential Zoomerang survey as a key component of the project. All supervisors in state service were sent a link to the survey, and the response rate was very high. The results of that supervisory study helped us plan and focus supervisory training based upon the skills supervisors identified. To ensure our training continues to meet the needs of supervisors, we are once again asking all supervisors in state service to complete an updated version of this original survey. The compiled results will ensure that our supervisory training continues to meet the changing needs of supervisors across the state. To access and complete the confidential survey please use the link shown"

We will include the link on the note we send them, as well as contact names and addresses if they have any questions. We appreciate your help with this supervisory survey. Please contact me if you have any questions, thanks again.

Tracy D. Gallo, Director
Workforce Development and Wellness Division

The Wellness Program is still looking for Activity Program Coordinators. If anyone can help us out, or if HR Administrators would be willing to help out it would be greatly appreciated! We promise to make it easy for you! Please contact Dianne VanderBush at 241-1535 or email her at dianne.vanderbush@state.vt.us. Thank you!

What Can We Do For You?

The primary function of the **Recruitment Services Division** is to attract a high quality and diverse applicant pool. The Department of Human Resources Recruiters are assigned to work with specific agencies and departments to build relationships with the HR Administrators and hiring managers, so that we can better understand and respond to your recruitment needs.

Recruitment should begin with a careful analysis of the position, its minimum qualifications and time constraints, followed by development of effective screening questions, to include preferred qualifications for the particular job posting. Much of this information can be gathered through a "Scope Conference" between the Recruiter, the HR Administrator, and the hiring manager. Scope conferences provide the Recruiter with more information about the particular job and the specific needs of the hiring manager. This in turn prepares the Recruiter to provide better responses to applicant inquiries. Advertising options may also be discussed to attract a quality pool of applicants for your posting.

The Recruitment Services Division showcases the State of Vermont as an employer at numerous job fairs around the state as well as through other outreach efforts. We encourage hiring managers to send a representative to job fairs with our staff to recruit for hard to fill openings. Having employees available is a great way for applicants to learn more about specific jobs and what it's like to work in your department.

The Coordinated Advertising Program is designed to present an attractive, positive image of the State as an employer of choice and to realize cost benefit savings by coordinating and placing a coordinated weekly advertisement in each of the *Times Argus/Rutland Herald* and the *Burlington Free Press*. We consolidate anywhere from two to 18 individual ads into the consolidated advertisement for each newspaper. Using the coordinated ad saves the State in excess of \$150,000 per year in advertising costs.

To assist applicants with the online application, there are three computer kiosks available at our 144 State Street offices for applicants who do not have access to a computer. The recruiters are available to assist applicants in completing the online application and applying for specific jobs.

We recently implemented an online typing test. This allows applicants to access the test from any computer, in addition to being available on our computer kiosks. The link to the testing software is provided in job postings that have typing requirement as a qualification.

The division is also responsible for working with employees who have mandatory reemployment rights through the Reemployment Rights Article of the contract. Individuals with reemployment rights meet with a Recruiter to set their parameters (pay grade, location, department, etc.) for reemployment.

Who Can Help Me With What?

For questions related to the following, please contact:

- Assistance with the Online Application – **1-800-640-1657**
- To submit an ad or Career Builder Request – DHR-AdRequests@state.vt.us
- Newspaper Advertising Questions – **Ellen Gokey**
- Career Builder Questions – **Gloria Abbiati**
- Advertising Invoices – **Tanya Jarvis**
- Job Fairs – **Ellen Gokey**
- Outreach – **Ann Carnell**
- Applicant Merging – **Tanya Jarvis**
- RIF Reemployment Process – **Ann Carnell**
- Typing Tests – **Tanya Jarvis**

The Recruitment Staff can be reached directly by e-mail or phone at:

rossie.conklin@state.vt.us, 828-1509
gloria.abbiatti@state.vt.us, 828-1510
ann.carnell@state.vt.us, 828-1507
ellen.gokey@state.vt.us, 829-1511
tanya.jarvis@state.vt.us, 828-1512

Save The Date!!!
March 27, 2008
1:00 – 4:00
HR Partners
Meeting
Hazen's Notch,
The Summit
Waterbury

Meet the Staff of the Recruitment Services Division

In 1987, after ten years working for the former Department of Employment and Training (now VDOL), **Rossie Conklin** joined the Department of Human Resources. Rossie has held a variety of positions in DHR, including Director of the Vermont Learning Center, Director of Compensation and Classification and EEO Officer. Since August 2006, Rossie has been Director of the Recruitment Services Division, overseeing a staff of four Recruitment Specialists. Rossie is always interested in hearing from HR Administrators and hiring managers on how we can best meet your recruiting needs.

Ann Carnell joined DHR in 2001 after eight years of experience as an HR Specialist with Sears. With an employee population of over 250 in her previous company, Ann's background in recruiting and outreach has been beneficial to her role as a recruiter with the State of Vermont.

In her current position, Ann works closely with hiring departments to help promote their vacant positions and guides management through the recruitment process. Ann also shares responsibility for doing outreach for the State by working closely with the Career Resource Centers at the Vermont Department of Labor. Another hat Ann has worn over the years has been coordinating the reemployment process for those State employees who have been affected by Reduction in Force (RIF). Ann is the DHR contact person for those with RIF reemployment rights. Ann works closely with those individuals to assist them in their reemployment within State government. Ann is the Recruiter for the following agencies and departments: *BGS, BISHCA, DCF, DHR, DII, Finance & Management, Libraries, Tax, and VDOL*. In 2004, Ann obtained her PHR certification.

Tanya Jarvis has been with the Department of Human Resources since she began employment with the State in 2004. She has gone through the implementation of People Soft 8.8 and continues testing the system during upgrades and is responsible for eRecruit system maintenance as well. Tanya has a strong customer service background. In addition, Tanya is responsible for invoicing agencies and departments for the Coordinated Advertising Program and Career Builder job postings. As a Recruiter, Tanya performs a full range of recruiting and pre employment activities for the following agencies and departments: *Agriculture, Liquor Control, Mental Health, Public Service Board and Department; Public Safety, Transportation and the Veterans' Home*.

Ellen Gokey has been with the Recruitment Division for six months after six years of service in the banking industry as an HR Generalist. She recently assumed co-responsibility of the State Coordinated Advertising Program. Ellen is also a member of the Central Vermont Business Advisory Council where she helps to promote outreach to disabled job seekers. Working closely with Vermont colleges and universities, Ellen coordinates recruitment opportunities at job fairs, networking events, and is also a member of the Internship Committee. Ellen is currently studying to take the PHR certification. Ellen works with the following agencies and departments on their recruitment efforts: *AHS Central Office, Attorney General, Auditor, Commerce, DAIL, Health, OVHA, Secretary of State and the Treasurer's Office*.

Gloria Abbiati is the newest addition to the Recruitment Services Division. Gloria came to State Government in 1999 after five years as an HR Generalist at Norwich University. Her first job in State Government was with the DHR Recruitment Division after which she spent six years in HR at the Agency of Natural Resources. Gloria has an Associate in Science degree and earned her PHR certification in 2003. Gloria has quickly learned how the recruiting process changed during her hiatus! Gloria shares responsibility for the Coordinated Advertising Program and for posting job openings on Career Builder. She looks forward to representing the State at several upcoming Career Fairs. Agencies and departments that Gloria works with include: *Corrections, Education, Lottery, Military and Natural Resources*.

The HR Tool Box is distributed quarterly via email to our HR Partners. Please contact Karin, karin.pelletier@state.vt.us, or Chris, chris.mcconnell@state.vt.us, with suggestions for future articles.

Job Fairs

As part of its outreach efforts, the Recruitment Services Division attends a number of job fairs at colleges and universities in Vermont. We are scheduled to attend a number of these events during the months of March and April.

The Recruitment Services Division is extending an invitation to hiring managers to join us at any of these job fairs during the upcoming spring season. This is a great opportunity for hiring managers to speak one on one with job seekers about jobs in their agency or department!

Hiring managers who are interested in joining us at these upcoming events should contact Ellen Gokey, Recruitment Specialist, at ellen.gokey@state.vt.us or by calling 802-828-1511 to make arrangements to attend.

March 26, 1p-3p	Johnson State College
March 31, 12p-4:30p	Champlain College
April 1, 11:30a-3:30p	UVM
April 2, 10a-5p	BPW, Sheraton Hotel, Burlington
April 8, 11a-2p	Castleton
April 10, 1p-4p	Norwich University
April 10, 9a-1p	Community College of VT & VSAC @ Department of Labor, Burlington

The Department of Human Resources

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We're on the Web!
See us at:

www.vermontpersonnel.org

From the Governor's Workforce Equity and Diversity Council (GWEDC):

What is LEP? Equal Opportunity means providing access to employment opportunities and services to all, regardless of race, color, and national origin. For state agencies and departments that receive federal funding this means not only ensuring access to the services provided by your agency or department to individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), but also considering, hiring and promoting LEP individuals *based on their skills to perform job duties* and not on their English proficiency, unless English use is an essential job function.

Who is an LEP individual? Any individual who does not speak English as their primary language and who has a limited ability to read, speak, write and understand English can be considered "LEP". Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and federal Executive order 13166, state agencies or departments that receive any federal funds are required to take actions to assess and ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP individuals. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and Vermont's Fair Employment Practices Act requires LEP individuals be provided with equal opportunity in employment.

The Governor's Workforce Equity and Diversity Council, encourages all HR partners to consider the accessibility of their information by LEP individuals. Does information need to be translated? Do staff need to be trained how to interact appropriately with LEP individuals? Are appropriate hiring practices in place and understood? Agencies and Departments such as the Agency of Human Services and the Department of Labor already have in place information regarding LEP and provide training for their employees and access to their information for LEP individuals.

To assist in providing meaningful access to services and opportunities, a variety of resources are available. They include guidance on LEP and policies at www.LEP.gov; LEP assessment tools and translated posters from the Civil Rights Center at the US Department of Labor, www.dol.gov/oasam and "I Speak Flash Cards" (www.usdoj.gov/crt/cor/Pubs/ISpeakCards2004.pdf) to assist in identifying a LEP individual's preferred language.